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B.C. Farm Employers' Handbook

Book One Personnel Planning and Regulations

The B.C. Farm Employers' Handbook is a series of five booklets designed to assist farm managers to effectively manage their human resources.

The books in the series and a brief outline of their contents are as follows:

Book One: Personnel Planning and Regulations
- *Deciding to Become an Employer*
- *The Personnel Planning Process*
- *Complying with Regulations*
- *Keeping Records*

Book Two: Hiring
- Objectives
- Job Description
- Recruitment
- Interviewing
- Testing
- Checking References
- Making the Selection
- Offering the Job/Advising Unsuccessful Candidates
- Employment Agreement
- Orientation

Book Three: Supervising
- Leadership
- Supervision
- Delegation
- Personal Style
- Special Supervisory Situations

Book Four: Motivating, Evaluating and Training
- Managing for Peak Performance
- Performance Evaluation
- Wages, Incentives, Benefits
- Training

Book Five: Communications, Problem Solving & Discipline
- Communications
- Dealing with Conflict
- Disciplining
- Dismissal and Termination

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The responsibility for the publication as written and all conclusions reached therein is the author's alone. The publication does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the federal and provincial governments which funded the publication.

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Introduction

The B.C. Farm Employers' Handbook is written as a guide to farm managers. The book will assist you to recruit better employees; to supervise, motivate and train your employees to achieve maximum performance; and to discipline and fire them should that be required.

Sound human resource management can result in increased productivity, reduced staff turnover, motivated employees and satisfied managers. Use this Handbook to help you achieve these ends.

The Handbook is divided into five books. We don't expect you to read each from cover to cover. Instead, familiarize yourself with the contents, place the books where they can be easily found and refer to them when you have need for specific information.

This, the first book in the series, *Personnel Planning and Regulations*, describes the personnel planning process, a process which helps you decide how many and what type of employees you require. The book also advises on regulations about which an employer needs to be aware.

Deciding to Become an Employer

An agriculture labour specialist from Michigan State University tells the following story:

Some years ago I met a man of about 45 who was the owner-operator of a large, very successful farm in California. When I asked him about his success, he told me this story.

"The farm was not making an adequate return so I expanded. I borrowed more money and hired more labour but it didn't seem to help much. It just gave me more to do and more to worry about. A tightness in the chest sent me to a doctor who said I was a prime candidate for a heart attack, that I must slow down, lower the stress level. I went back to the books, considered alternatives, but nothing looked promising.

Then one night when I couldn't sleep, I lay there pondering the problems and a thought hit me: I am not a producer, I am an employer of people and those people produce the product. I am wearing the wrong hat. The next morning I got up and went out and actually purchased a new hat, then went to the library and checked out books on personnel management, business organization and business relations.

That was five years ago. Now, the farm is making big profits, I have very few problems. On the contrary, my employees are a real source of enjoyment. Of course, I haven't thrown out my producer hat. I just wear it a lot less often and my health has returned, not because of more sleep but because of low distress and good sleep."

Deciding to become an employer requires careful consideration. Being a successful manager of farm labour may require changing how you operate on a day-to-day basis.

The creation of a new position must benefit both you and your employee. If the employee's needs are not met, you will suffer high turnover and training costs.

Many farms operate with the labour force which happens to have been readily accessible. Most farmers do not consciously decide to become employers. They see themselves as farmers first, employers second. As demands upon their time overwhelm them, farmers hire additional labour. Hiring without careful planning can lead to disappointment.

Economic Benefits

In analyzing the need to hire a new employee, you must take into account both economic and non-economic benefits.

Economic benefits:

- increased efficiency
- more time for marketing, pricing and financial activities
- increased likelihood of completing tasks on time
- more efficient use of capital and overhead
- increased production for profit
- opportunities for growth

Non-Economic Benefits

Non-Economic benefits:

- reduced stress and pressure
- increased flexibility of time for leisure, health, family activities, etc.

Your objectives in hiring should be carefully thought out and written down so you can refer to them when you evaluate results.

Some questions you should ask yourself before hiring are:

a) What type of help do I need?

- a short term employee to perform only specific projects such as yard cleanup, a construction project, stone picking or similar tasks.
- a part-time employee to perform specific tasks on a regular basis, for example, someone who does morning feeding only.
- a fulltime seasonal employee to perform specific or a wide range of duties throughout the production season
- a permanent employee to perfonn a wide range of duties on a year-round basis.

b) Do I have sufficient cash flow to maintain the type of employee I need?

c) Will the job keep the interest of a highly motivated employee?

d) Do I have sufficient people skills and patience to train, supervise and evaluate an employee?

e) What type of employee is best suited to the job?

The Personnel Planning Process

Personnel management can be defined as the creation of a work environment whereby workers can fulfill their needs while meeting the objectives of the firm. This social, personal, creative and financial environment doesn't happen by chance; it requires planning.

Whether you already have farm employees or whether you have just made the decision to hire an employee, careful and detailed planning is needed. Planning provides a basis for seeking out employees who have the skills and personal characteristics that best meet the needs of your business. The planning process should result in the employment of the correct number of staff, with the necessary talents and skills, doing the appropriate job, performing the right activity and above all working as a team towards the achievement of objectives.

By taking personnel planning seriously and giving the process the time and effort it requires, you will reduce problems that can arise if the most effective employee isn't hired. Not having the right person or the right team in the right job can have high costs. These costs include accidents and injuries, costly repairs, lost time, high employee turnover, lower yields and a variety of other problems which any manager would rather not have to handle.

Personnel Planning Process

- ☐ Assess Current Situation
  - ☐ Yourself
  - ☐ Labour Needs
  - ☐ Labour Component
  - ☐ Labour Environment
- ☐ Is There a Match?
- ☐ Are New Employees Needed?

The personnel planning process has three steps.

1. Assess your current situation

   - yourself
   - your labour needs
   - your current labour component
   - your labour environment and practices

2. Decide if your labour needs and labour component match

3. Decide if new employees are needed and proceed with the hiring process.

Step 1: Assess Your Current Situation

Personnel Planning Process

- ☑ Assess Current Situation
  - ☑ Yourself
  - ☐ Labour Needs
  - ☐ Labour Component
  - ☐ Labour Environment
- ☐ Is There a Match?
- ☐ Are New Employees Needed?

Assess yourself

Start with a self-assessment. What are your personal characteristics? What experience and supervisory skills do you have? What are your attitudes toward employees?

Self analysis isn't easy and often isn't accurate, but it's an important start. In farm businesses, managers often strive for close working relationships with their employees, often need to delegate important responsibilities, and want employees to feel a commitment to the goals of the business. Having an employer and employee who are compatible is essential, but it is unlikely to happen by chance. Start by asking yourself the following questions. You may wish to have your spouse or another person involved in the review.

What are my strengths and weaknesses? _____

_____

_____

Am I a good teacher? _____

Do I have patience to work with people with no farm background or little farm experience? _____

Am I a good listener? _____

Do I trust my employees? _____

Do I have biases which could get in the way of developing a good relationship with my employees? e.g. tobacco, alcohol, politics, breed of livestock, race, religion, _____

_____

Am I a perfectionist? _____

Do the current employees respect and like me? _____

Do I tend to be a pessimist or an optimist? _____

Do I delegate well? _____

Think about the answers you gave to the above questions and imagine the effect they may have on a person who works for you.

Personnel Planning Process

- ☑ Assess Current Situation
  - ☑ Yourself
  - ☑ Labour Needs
  - ☐ Labour Component
  - ☐ Labour Environment
- ☐ Is There a Match?
- ☐ Are New Employees Needed?

Assess your labour needs

Next, assess your labour requirements. How much labour do you need and when? How much do you need during various seasons?

Use the Labour Estimate Worksheet on the next page as a guide to determining your personnel needs. You'll end up with a statement of the kind and amount of work to be done. Divide the total work into the kinds and number of jobs to be filled. Determine how many employees and what kind of employees they need to be: regular or occasional, skilled or unskilled, technical or management.

In line 2 of the worksheet, the distribution of hours will depend on the type of farm. The grouping of months on your type of farm may be quite different from that shown in the form. For example, on a processing vegetable farm, July, August and September might be grouped together as the three months having the highest labour demand of the year. Your own farm records will be useful in completing a labour estimate worksheet.

Labour Estimate Worksheet

(Example)

Available Labour		Total hours for year	Distribution of hours			
			Dec. thru March	April May June	July Aug.	Sept. Oct. Nov.
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Suggested hours for full-time worker	2400	600	675	450	675
2	My estimate for full-time worker					
3	LABOUR HOURS AVAILABLE					
4	Operator (or Partner No. 1)					
5	Partner No. 2					
6	Family labour					
7	Hired labour					
8	Custom machine operators					
9	TOTAL LABOUR HOURS AVAILABLE					

Required Labour

10	DIRECT LABOUR HOURS NEEDED BY CROP AND ANIMAL ENTERPRISES							
11	Crop enterprises	Acres	Hr./Ac.					
12								
13								
16								
17								
18								
19								
20	TOTAL LABOUR HOURS NEEDED FOR CROPS							

21	Animal enterprises	No. Units	Hr./Un.					
22								
23								
24								
25								
26	TOTAL LABOUR HOURS NEEDED FOR ANIMALS							
27	TOTAL HOURS NEEDED FOR CROPS AND ANIMALS							
28	Total hours of Indirect Labour Needed							
29	TOTAL LABOUR HOURS NEEDED (lines 27 & 28)							
30	TOTAL AVAILABLE (line 9)							
31	Additional Labour Hours Required (L.29 minus L.30)							
32	Excess Labour Hours Available (L.30 minus L.29)							

Personnel Planning Process

- ☑ Assess Current Situation
  - ☑ Yourself
  - ☑ Labour Needs
  - ☑ Labour Component
  - ☐ Labour Environment
- ☐ Is There a Match?
- ☐ Are New Employees Needed?

Assess your current labour component

Look at your current labour component in your farming operation. As you take this inventory, include yourself and any family members who are actively involved in the farm. Describe the job each of these people do. As you write out these descriptions, think about the duties of the position, the qualifications that are required, the level of responsibility that the employee is expected to take, and the reporting structure. For assistance in doing this, refer to the section on "Job Description" in Book 2 of the B.C. *Farm Employers' Handbook*. An abbreviated Job Description Form is shown below.

Now think about your individual employees and appraise their past experience and performance as well as their personalities, needs and desires.

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: _____

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION: _____

_____

_____

SALARY RANGE: _____ **WORK HOURS** _____

BENEFITS: _____

DUTIES: _____

SUPERVISED BY: _____

SUPERVISE: _____

QUALIFICATIONS: _____

FORMAL EDUCATION: _____

EXPERIENCE: _____

SKILL REQUIREMENTS: _____

Personnel Planning Process

- ☑ Assess Current Situation
  - ☑ Yourself
  - ☑ Labour Needs
  - ☑ Labour Component
  - ☑ Labour Environment
- ☐ Is There a Match?
- ☐ Are New Employees Needed?

Assess your working environment

To attract good employees, your business environment must be attractive; it must be a place where your prospective employees might want to work. Every effort must be taken to create an environment where employees are appreciated and recognized.

How many of these advantages can you offer?

- ☐ competitive wages
- ☐ flexible work schedule
- ☐ opportunity for training
- ☐ an appealing incentive program
- ☐ a good work environment
- ☐ good people to work with
- ☐ good equipment in safe condition
- ☐ future potential - chance for growth and responsibility

Unless you checked several of the items is this list, you may have trouble attracting good employees. How many of the features you didn't check could you incorporate into your work place?

Think about your organizational structure. Who is the boss? Who reports to whom? What can each employee decide on his or her own? These questions are especially important in a family operation. Having to report to two bosses is very difficult. It is one of the major reasons employees leave.

Organizational structure must be dealt with. No two farms are organized alike because managers, employees, families and the work involved vary from one farm to another. Keys to effective organizing include proper planning of the organization, clear relationships among the people in the organization, delegation of authority, clear limits to delegation, authority accompanied with responsibility and not too much or too little organization.

Step 2: Decide If Your Labour Needs and Labour Component Match

Now that you've taken a look at your skills, your labour requirements, your current labour supply and your work environment, you can see if your current labour supply and your needs match. Look again at the labour requirements you outlined and at the abilities and skills of your current employees. There are a variety of outcomes your assessment might produce.

Possible Outcomes

1. You have a good match. Your current employees have the skills and desire to do all the jobs your farm operation requires.
2. You have the right number of good employees but some changes in the jobs they do would work better.
3. You have too many employees or the wrong employee for the job you need done.
4. You don't have enough employees to do the work that needs to be done.

Personnel Planning Process

- ☑ Assess Current Situation
  - ☑ Yourself
  - ☑ Labour Needs
  - ☑ Labour Component
  - ☑ Labour Environment
- ☑ Is There a Match?
- ☐ Are New Employees Needed?

If your assessment shows outcome #1, your employees will continue in the present jobs.

If your assessment shows outcome #2, spend some time assessing your employees and developing new job descriptions that would match your needs and their talents.

If your assessment shows outcome #3, consider if an employee could be retrained. Or, you might consider expanding your operation to make use of valued employees. If neither of those options works, the dismissal of an employee may be necessary. This might be the outcome of a major change in your business where you no longer require an employee's particular skills, or it may be the result of previous unsatisfactory employee performance. Read the section on Dismissal and Termination in Book 5 before dismissing an employee.

If your assessment shows the fourth outcome, proceed with the next step in the personnel planning process.

Step 3: Decide if new Employees are Needed and Proceed with Hiring

Before you hire a new employee, you will want to assess the job that you need done and think carefully about the qualifications an employee would require to do the job. The key is to hire employees who fit the job description in the essential areas.

How to hire an employee is discussed in detail in Book 2 of the B.C. *Employers' Handbook*.

Personnel Planning Process

- ☑ Assess Current Situation
  - ☑ Yourself
  - ☑ Labour Needs
  - ☑ Labour Component
  - ☑ Labour Environment
- ☑ Is There a Match?
- ☑ Are New Employees Needed?

Complying With Regulations

As an employer, you are required to comply with certain regulations including mandatory payroll deductions, Workers' Compensation, and employment standards. Many of these standards have been put in place for the benefit of employees and being covered by such regulations goes a long way to meeting their basic needs relating to maintenance and security. In the long run, such regulations benefit both the employee and the employer.

Payroll Deductions

For full details on what, when and how much to deduct, contact your nearest Revenue Canada Taxation Office. You will be required to fill in and return a Revenue Canada Employer Registration Form. Also request a current Employer Payroll Package.The form, Employer Guide for Source Deductions, Revenue Canada T400(E), gives full details.

Under most circumstances, you will make payroll deductions for three reasons:

Income Tax

Ask your employee to fill in a TD1 form. Depending on how much the employee estimates he or she will earn during the year, you will be required to deduct income tax from the paycheque.

Canada Pension Plan

You are expected to deduct the employee's CPP contribution. These contributions begin once the employee has earned $250.00 and/or worked 25 days. As the employer, you are also required to pay an employer contribution equal to the amount of the employee contribution. You will not deduct CPP contributions under the following circumstances:

- the employee is under 18 years of age
- the employee is over 70 years or has opted out of the Canada Pension Plan

Unemployment Insurance

Deductions for unemployment insurance must be made if and when an employee has worked 15 hours or earned $136.00 per week. At that time, you are required to go back to day one of the employment period and make deductions for that period as well. It is therefore recommended that you deduct unemployment insurance premiums for every individual you employ, regardless of the amount that may be earned. As the employer, you will be required to pay contributions 1.4 times the value of the employee's premiums.

Workers' Compensation

Any farmer who operates as a limited company or employs full-time, part-time or seasonal workers is required to register and pay assessments to the Workers' Compensation Board.

The Workers' Compensation system in British Columbia provides two-way protection. For the worker, the system seeks to improve job health and safety and helps soften the financial consequences of an industrial injury or disease. For the employer, it removes the threat of a lawsuit and possible heavy settlement if an injured worker sues for damages and it provides a mechanism for sharing of costs in industrial injuries and disease.

Unlike farmworkers in some other provinces, farmworkers are covered under Workers' Compensation in this province. Some farm employers in provinces which don't have this protection regard the B.C. system as being an important benefit.

For details on how to register and submit payroll returns and assessment payments, contact the nearest Workers' Compensation Board office.

The WCB has publications available which describe the program and the responsibilities and rights of both employers and employees. One is called "Farmers and the WCB" and outlines your responsibilities as an employer. The other, "Farmworkers and the WCB", explains compensation procedures for claimants. You are encouraged to keep copies of this publication on hand for your employees.

Legislated Employment Standards

As an employer, you are required to comply with certain regulations which spell out employment standards. These standards include such items as minimum wage, annual vacation and holiday pay, termination of employment and payment of wages. Farm workers are exempt from some of the provincial standards, for example hours of work, but most do apply.

To get information on employment standards with which you are required to comply, contact the Employment Standards Branch of the B.C. Ministry of Labour and Consumer Services. Ask for their *Employment Standards Bulletins*.

Safety

Farm employees are not covered by the provincial Industrial Health and Safety Regulations. The agriculture industry has chosen to police itself regarding farm safety matters. The Farm and Ranch Safety Agency is responsible for supplying safety guidelines to farmers in the province. The agency has a series of Farm Safety Checklists which you are encouraged to use as you assess safety matters on your own property.

Copies of these checklists and publications relating to safety matters are available from the B.C. Federation of Agriculture office in Victoria at 846 Broughton Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1E4.

One checklist refers specifically to Employee Training and Accommodation and is reproduced here.

Employee Training/Accommodation

1) Is there a training schedule or checklist for new employees for each facet of the operation? (e.g. machinery operation, animal handling, ladder use, etc.) .....❒ Yes ❒ No

2) Does the training include: emphasis on safety .....❒ Yes ❒ No
proper lifting techniques .....❒ Yes ❒ No
emphasis on hand safety .....❒ Yes ❒ No
where to go for help with a task.....❒ Yes ❒ No
where to go for help in an emergency ...❒ Yes ❒ No
explanation of each job's hazards and how to deal with them .....❒ Yes ❒ No

3) Does the farmer assume the employee knows how to do a task? .....❒ Yes ❒ No

4) Are safety posters put up and pamphlets available? .....❒ Yes ❒ No

5) Are accommodations well away from pesticide storage or spray areas, and other potentially hazardous areas? .....❒ Yes ❒ No

6) Do the accommodations have: ❒ showers ❒ heating ❒ toilets ❒ electricity?

Human Rights

As you go through the process of hiring an employee, you need to keep in mind some of the provisions of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Sections 7 and 8 of that Act state the following:

> 7. It is a discriminatory practice, directly or indirectly,
>
> (a) to refuse to employ or continue to employ any individual, or
>
> (b) in the course of employment, to differentiate adversely in relation to an employee, on a prohibited ground of discrimination.
>
> 8. It is discriminatory practice
>
> (a) to use or circulate any form of application for employment, or
>
> (b) in connection with employment or prospective employment,
>
> (i) to publish any advertisement, or
>
> (ii) to make any written or oral inquiry...that expresses or implies any limitation, specification, or preference based on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

The "prohibited grounds of discrimination" referred to in the Act include race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Employers should keep in mind that what really matters is the actual impact of their employment systems and personnel policies. While employers may not intend to discriminate, traditionally used selection procedures may operate to exclude individuals from certain groups disproportionately. Employers should ask themselves the following questions:

1. Might the answer to a particular question be used to exclude certain groups disproportionately? e.g. height and weight requirements tend to screen out disproportionate numbers of women and some minorities.
2. Is the information asked for really necessary to assess the applicant's ability to perform the job? e.g. birthplace

Limitations, specifications, or preferences that relate to a genuine occupational requirement are not considered discriminatory.

Regulations Checklist

Do you comply with the following?

Payroll Deductions

- ☐ Income Tax
- ☐ Canada Pension Plan
- ☐ Unemployment Insurance

☐ Workers' Compensation

Legislated Employment Standards

- ☐ Minimum Wage
- ☐ Annual Vacation and Holiday Pay

☐ Safety Guidelines

☐ Human Rights Legislation

Keeping Records

Accurate employment records are a valuable aid to managers in making decisions about farm labour. Records show what labour was used, when and what it cost. Managers can refer to records in their personnel planning process.

Payroll Records

Good payroll management is vital to the establishment and maintenance of a good working relationship with your employees. Employees value a payroll which accurately accounts for all hours worked, is on time and includes the mandatory deductions of Unemployment Insurance, Canada Pension and Income Tax.

From a manager's point of view, there are several reasons to maintain accurate payroll records.

- To determine with accuracy the amounts owed and previously paid to employees each pay period.
- To determine the proper amount that must be withheld from the earnings of each employee.
- To meet government labour regulations e.g. minimum wage, holiday pay etc.
- To meet Revenue Canada requirements.
- To settle potential disputes.

To decide if your payroll records are adequate, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the information I am keeping vital?
- What will occur if I don't have the information?
- Is the information used?
- Is the information accurate?
- What is the cost (dollars and time) to maintain my system?

If you have a computer, using it to manage your payroll could save you considerable time. Whether you use a computer or do your payroll by hand, you need to produce a statement for your employee(s) that show the earnings and the deductions. A sample of an Employee Earnings Statement follows.

Employee Earnings Statement

Name _____ Social Insurance No. _____

Address _____ Net Claim code _____

Pay Period _____

	Rate/Particulars	Amount
Basic Pay (Regular Hours)		
+ Overtime Hours		
Bonus, Incentive Pay		
+ Housing, Room and Board		
+ Other Taxable Benefits		
+ Vacation Pay		
_____		
= **Gross Earnings**		
- C.P.P.		
- Unemployment Insurance		
- Income Tax		
- Housing, Room and Board		
- Pay Advance		
- Other Deductions		
= **Net Pay**		

Record of Days Not Worked

Sick Days Taken _____

Vacation Days Taken _____

Work Days Off _____

EMPLOYEE EARNINGS AND DEDUCTIONS RECORDS

Employee Name				Social Insurance Number					Date Started		
Address				Telephone Number					Date Left		

Month or Pay Period	Hours	Rate	Gross Wages	Employee Deductions		Employee Deductions				Net Wages	Employer's Contribution		Total Remittance (A+B+C+D+E)
				C.P.P. (A)	U.I.C. (B)	Income Tax (C)	Room & Board	Advance	Other Deductions		C.P.P. (D)	U.I.C. (E)	
Totals													

T-4 Information

Total Earnings Before Deductions	C.P.P.	U.I.C.	Income Tax	U.I. Insurable Earnings	Date Issued

Record of Employment (day, month, year)

First Day Worked _____

Last Day Worked _____

Date Issued _____

Employer _____

You will also want to have a record for your own files for each employee. The following form could be used.

Personnel Files

Your employee records form a vital part of your personnel management system. Allocate a file to each employee and include the following:

- Job description
- Application form
- Interview report
- Reference check results
- Letter of offer with terms and conditions of employment
- Salary: starting and increases
- Tax exemptions and deductions
- Performance evaluations
- Grievances
- Disciplinary actions
- Dismissal notice
- Letter of resignation
- Exit interview report
- Other confidential information
- Record of employment (for unemployment insurance claims)

In addition to the above records, reserve a section of your filing system for the following general documents related to personnel management:

- Job descriptions
- Orientation handout
- Policies and Procedures - may be in manual or handbook form
- Culture and values of the organization
- Copies of the books in this series *B.C. Farm Employers' Handbook*

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The following sources were used in producing The Farm Employers' Handbook. These same sources are recommended for further reading if more information is sought.

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